![King County logo]

King County

Health Reform Initiative

Table Top Scenario #5
Group Health – Fred has Diabetes

Background

Chronic conditions impact the county's health care spending and productivity. A study of chronic disease in the Dow Chemical Company workforce using the Stanford Presenteeism Scale calculated that the average cost per employee with self reported chronic conditions amounted to $2,278 for medical care, $661 for absenteeism and $6,721 for work impairment. One of the keys to effective disease management is an active and involved relationship between a patient and doctor where the patient takes an active role in managing his or her health. A personal health record can play a key role here.

The Institute of Medicine's 2001 landmark book, *Crossing the Quality Chasm*, delineated 10 "design rules" for improving care. The success of six of these 10 "rules" depends directly on patients' involvement in their care. Recognizing the importance of having relevant information available to patients for management of their medical conditions, David Brailer, national coordinator for health information technology in the Department of Health and Human Services, has made personal health records a cornerstone in the national strategy for health information technology.

KingCare members can now create a personal health record through Aetna Navigator. Personal health records offer a number of potential benefits to patients, their physicians and the health care system. These include:

• **Empowerment of patients.** PHRs let patients verify the information in their medical record and monitor health data about themselves (very useful in chronic disease management). PHRs also provide scheduling reminders for health maintenance services.

• **Improved patient-provider relationships.** PHRs improve communication between patients and clinicians, allow documentation of interactions with patients and convey timely explanations of test results.

• **Increased patient safety.** PHRs provide drug alerts, help identify missed procedures and services, and get important test results to patients rapidly. PHRs also give patients timely access to updated care plans.

• **Improved quality of care.** PHRs enable continuous, comprehensive care with better coordination between patients, physicians and other providers.

• **More efficient delivery of care.** PHRs help avoid duplicative testing and unnecessary services. They provide more efficient communication between patients and physicians (e.g., avoiding congested office phones).

• **Better safeguards on health information privacy.** By giving patients control of access to their records, PHRs offer more selectivity in sharing of personal health information. The PCASSO (patient-centered access to secure systems online) study at the University of California-San Diego suggests that PHRs are more secure than paper records.

• **Bigger cost savings.** Improved documentation brought about by PHRs can decrease malpractice costs. PHRs' ability to reduce duplicative tests and services is a factor here, too.

Scenario
Fred has diabetes and is very interested in activity managing his condition in partnership with his doctor at Group Health. However, he finds it hard to keep track of all of the information such has his lab results and his doctors instructions. He is also interested in learning more about his condition and treatment.

Group Health has an online shared medical record that is integrated with the doctor's electronic medical record so patients can see their lab results and graph things like cholesterol, blood pressure, weight and height. This can help Fred track his lab results, see the after visit summary his doctor writes up in his medical record and further research his condition and treatment. While Fred is reviewing his personal health record, he has a question he wants to ask his doctor about having a foot exam. He is able to e-mail his doctor directly. If his doctor recommends that Fred schedule a visit, he can request an appointment through MyGroupHealth.

Challenge
1. How can Fred use Group Health's shared medical record to keep track of vital information like his blood glucose levels and after visit summaries written by his doctor?
2. How can Fred use www.ghc.org to find more information on treatment of diabetes?
3. How can Fred use MyGroupHealth to e-mail a question to his doctor?

Tools
Click on this Group Health Fred Has Diabetes link to download and install the Group Health demo.

Outcome
Identify which of the county's Health Reform Initiative goals is accomplished by how you solved the scenario:

1. Manage risk upstream – prevention of chronic disease by encouraging employees to eat smart, move more, stress less and quit tobacco.
2. Choose well -- help employees be smarter health care consumers. Educate them about how their choices impact health care costs and outcomes.

3. Empower employees to be partners in managing their own health care – give employees the tools they need to pro-actively manage their own health and ensure they are getting the best treatment possible.
4. Get employees to understand what they pay is not the cost of health care, but only their share.